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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/26/2018  
TAGS: [AF](#) [IT](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [PREL](#)  
SUBJECT: USG RESPONSE TO ITALIAN PROPOSAL FOR RC-WEST  
MEETINGS

REF: USNATO 37

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY EUR/RPM GARY ROBBINS  
FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

1.(U) This cable contains an action request, please see Para  
[13](#).

2.(C) SUMMARY: Reftel summarizes an Italian initiative passed as a non-paper to USNATO, Embassy Rome, Embassy Kabul and to the Department the week of January 21-25, which proposes a series of meetings among ISAF Regional Command-West (RC-W) contributing nations, modeled after the RC-South meeting format held by Australia, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Netherlands, Romania, United States, and the United Kingdom. The Italians are interested in "a strong civilian footprint" for the forum, in order to avoid overlapping with NATO-ISAF. They have proposed that the "West4" consultations, as the paper titles the proposed meetings, begin with a March 4 meeting in Rome at the Political Director or Assistant Secretary level. USNATO and Embassies Rome and Kabul are

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asked to convey the USG response, drawing on the points in Para 3. END SUMMARY.

[13](#). (SBU REL ISAF) ACTION REQUEST: USNATO and Embassies Rome and Kabul are asked, at their earliest convenience, to draw on the following points in responding to the relevant officials who contacted them in late January (Washington will deliver the same points to the Italian Embassy):

-- The U.S. has no objection to the idea of an informal gathering of RC-W nations that would meet periodically with the aim of acquiring a shared understanding of the challenges of operating in the region.

-- We believe that such a grouping could serve as a useful forum for discussing a wide range of issues specific to the RC-West region, including regional security, political, economic development, and humanitarian issues.

-- In order not to duplicate or undermine existing formal NATO-ISAF mechanisms, the U.S. supports an informal RC-W format grouping focused on information sharing and discussion rather than on formal operational coordination or policy making.

-- To be most effective, the U.S. believes RC-W meetings should take place at the RC-W Headquarters or in Kabul, with only occasional meetings at NATO Headquarters in Brussels or

in RC-W capitals. The U.S. prefers that initial meetings, in particular, occur in Afghanistan, rather than in RC-W capitals.

-- The U.S. would prefer to participate in RC-W meetings at the working level or office director level (below assistant secretary). For an early March meeting in Rome, the U.S.

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will identify an appropriate DAS or Office Director. However, the USG will not be able to attend at the level of Political Director or Assistant Secretary.

4.(C) The USG will manage RC-W consultations in a fashion similar to that of the existing RC-S forum, sending interagency teams as appropriate based on the agenda topics and meeting host(s).

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